

For all grades...

MAKING FUN WITH MAIN IDEA AND CENTRAL POINT A POWER THINKING & PATTERN PUZZLE LESSON

Our school has an aligned curriculum where our instructional focus on *reading* is reflected in every content area, and all content areas are reflected in our reading classes. We are all reading/content teachers.

While the *main idea* may be easy enough to find in a story or short passage, it is not so simple in longer passages or textbooks. When the idea of Central Point comes into the mix, a larger main idea made up of several related ideas in a text, we find our students having great difficulty.

Central Point Investigations

Recently, our eighth grade students were learning about the skeleton in science class. Before they read the chapter from their text, I used the chapter information to introduce the central point (Power 1) and the main ideas (Power 2's and 3's). We completed the whole lesson before they ever saw the textbook!

I used the idea of the T.V. show, *CSI, Crime Scene Investigations*. My idea was to have the students work as teams of investigators to put the “corpse” back together. I provided evidence to lead them to the correctly assembled skeleton.

First, I read the selection to determine the central point or Power 1. Then, I printed out the main ideas (Power 2's) in large type and cut these into strips. I calculated how many I would need depending on the class size and the number of groups in each class.

I made copies of a paper skeleton which I got from a science buddy. Next, I printed out individual detail sentences from the paragraphs of the text (Power 3's and 4's) which described properties of the bones. I pasted these on the corresponding paper bones. The skull was left blank.

Each group of students received a pattern puzzle – the unassembled paper bones and the separate strips of paper with the Power 1 (central point) and Power 2 (paragraph main ideas) statements. I instructed the groups to reassemble the skeleton pattern puzzle using the details printed on the bones. Next, they needed to select the central point statement from all of the main idea statements and place it on the skull. The remainder of the main idea strips were used as transitions at the body joints. Students needed to pay special attention to the details on the paper bones which gave hints about their location, both as body parts and paragraph parts.

The activity was fun and the room exploded with noise, but “good” noise as the students were repeating the details of the skeletal system over and over to each other. Students found signal words to empower their decisions on strip and bone placement. Organization, visual logic, and word placement all became important to this task. Each time the group felt



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confused they repeated out loud all the information they had assembled. By the time they were ready to present their skeleton, they could recite the details with mastery.

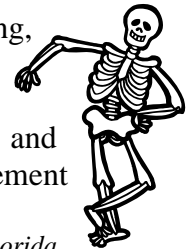
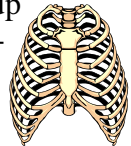
When each group completed its presentation, we conducted a walk-through assessment with clipboards and the textbook as a reference. No comments could be made out loud, only pencil observations. Students were asked to observe and record: 1) anything different from their skeleton, 2) any new ideas they discovered, and 3) any mistakes the other groups made. Then, they rated each completed skeleton with a score of 1 to 5, with 5 being perfect.

As a class, we developed a rubric with a 1-5 scale for grading. Our rubric included five items: 1. skeleton assembly, 2. main idea placement, 3. central point accuracy, 4. group members' participation, and 5. visiting groups average rating. The following is a sample from one group.

This central point investigation lesson could be used for any topic which can be illustrated by an object having several parts or pieces, e.g., a flower, a machine, the food pyramid. It could be used for a country (use a topographical map) or for a character in a story (paper doll) or for a novel or short story by using a significant object (Jack's beanstalk, Huck Finn's raft, Ralph's conch shell).

To differentiate: For groups which have difficulty with sorting or organizing, have them do the activity without the Power 1 and Power 2 strips or place those central point and main idea strips where they belong on the diagram for the students. For more advanced groups, ask the students to come up with the Power 1 and Power 2 statements or show them the statements and ask them to defend their placement choices.

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ITEM	SCORE	COMMENTS
1. Skeleton assembly	3	feet were placed wrong, arm bone on leg.
2. Main idea placement	4	one out of place
3. Central point accuracy	5	correct
4. Group members' participation	4	one member fooled around, no help
5. Visiting groups average rating	4	average score from other 4 groups (4,3,4,5)
TOTAL POINTS / %	20 / 80%	

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